Negative Patterns and Forms in the African American Vernacular English With reference to Alice Walker's The Color Purple

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Abstract

The prior goal of the study is to provide a rather comprehensive analysis of the variable negative forms and patterns manipulated in Alice Walker's The Color Purple as a trustworthy source of information about the distinctive features of the African American Vernacular English(AAVE henceforth). The study assumes that AAVE shows quite distinctive syntactic features that make it considerably different from other varieties of English. The most prominent among these features is the forms and patterns of negation that are employed heavily in Walker's The Color Purple .The study focuses mainly on forms like: negative concord, negative inversion, negative postposing, and so forth. The use of AAVE in the novel is intentional as it consolidates the identity of the Afro-American oppressed character. Walker insists that Celie , her main character in the novel, , uses AAVE even though her character has changed dramatically from a naive black woman into an .independent one

المستخلص:

تهدف الدراسة إلى تقديم تحليل شامل إلى حد ما لأشكال النفي وأنماطه المتنوعة والتي تم توظيفها في رواية أليس ووكر "اللون الأرجواني" تلك الرواية التي تعتبر مصدرا أنموذجا للصفات المميزة للانجليزية الافروامريكية العامية. تفترض الدراسة أن الافروامريكية العامية تعرض صفات تركيبية مميزة تجعل منها لهجة مختلفة بقدر كبير عن اللهجات الانجليزية

الأخرى. ولعل أهم تلك الصفات التركيبية ما يتعلق بأشكال النفي وأنماطه التي استخدمت بشكل كبير في رواية "اللون الأرجواني" للكاتبة الافروامريكية أليس ووكر. تركز الدراسة تحديدا على أنماط مثل النفي المزدوج والقلب في النفي والتأخير في النفي وغيرها. إن استخدام اللهجة الافروامريكية في الرواية كان خيارا مقصودا كون ذلك الأمر يدعم الشخصية الافروامريكية المضطهدة. لقد أصرت ووكر على أن تستمر سيلي، الشخصية الرئيسة في الرواية، على استخدام اللهجة الافروامريكية العامية على الرغم من التطور الكبير الذي شهدته الشخصية بتحولها من إمراة سوداء ساذجة إلى شخصية مستقلة حرة.

Introduction −1

AAVE has attracted much of researchers' efforts in the last few decades as it is thought to be syntactically, phonologically, semantically and stylistically distinct from other varieties of English. The study is mainly interested in the syntactic features of AAVE, namely its negative system. The study is an endeavor to examine the negative patterns and constructions employed in AAVE. The study assumes that the use of certain negative forms and constructions in AAVE ,in general, and in The Color Purple in particular, is a characteristic feature of this variety and of the novel as well, being .an authentic example of it

Negation is, no doubt, a common syntactic feature shared by all natural languages employed all over the world. Each of these languages inevitably has its own way to reverse the truth value that exists in a given sentence, that is, to express negation. As such, negation is differently indicated in various languages with regard to negative elements distribution and the interpretation of sentences .that consist more than one element of negation as well

AAVE shows quite distinctive patterns of negation that attract lots of researchers' efforts that aim at providing the reader with the ample clarification of the AAVE negative-constructed sentences consisting, for example, double or multiple negation which might be .incorrectly interpreted as positive rather than negative

The present study is one attempt to explain forms of negation used in AAVE. It falls into several sections : section one is an introduction, section two gives a brief account of the development of women style of writing in general and Walker's style in The Color Purple in particular. Section three surveys the history and the origin of AAVE . Section four talks about AAVE as a social dialect normally identified with a certain community . And then, in section five, some dominant syntactic features found in AAVE are briefly reviewed. The study assumes that AAVE has its own patterns of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation that make it different from other English varieties, yet common features with these varieties are present. This section is a preface to section six which is devoted to deal with negation in AAVE. Following Howe and Walker (2000:119), the study assumes that negative forms of AVVE are constructed differently from those of standard American English. Given this importance, inconsiderable knowledge of how negative forms and constructions used in AAVE are constructed will undoubtedly impede the reader's interpretation of whatsoever literary work written in AAVE.

Rules of negation in AAVE are presented and, then, sought for in the novel under investigation in section seven and section eight respectively . These rules include the use of ain't, negative inversion, negative concord as well as negative postposing. Then after, the study ends with a summary and conclusion with some remarks for further research.

2- Alice Walker and her language in The Color Purple.

Women's literature tradition has developed with the realization of women's tradition in writing as clearly different from that of men's in several terms including narrative strategies, themes addressed, and voice. In addition to the fact that it is written by a woman, The Color Purple represents an identified way of women's writing that mainly emphasizes the role of male supremacy in the frustration of black women's struggle for self-independence.

Walker explores the estrangement and violence that make up the relation between her novel's black men and

women(Watkins,1982:1).In fact, The Color Purple, published in 1982 and won the Pulitzer Prize, is heavily concerned with highlighting the dominant issues of race, gender , class and the living conditions of the black women in the United States before the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.Therefore ,it is considered as one of the many novels that draw on womanism as it portrays the black women oppression and their living conditions in the U.S.A. .during that era

Walker's choice of a narrative style, that is without the intrusion of the author, forces memorable sympathy with Celie: the heroine, and narrator, and makes her presentation of estrangement of the black men and women of the novel incontestably affecting. By the use of such type of language, Walker aims at increasing neither the bulk of understated interaction among the characters, nor the profound emotional impacts. The majority of the letters written by Celie to God and to her sister and by Nettie to Celie compose The Color Purple as an epistolary novel. Celie's point of view towards the world would be set forth throughout these letters which are written in dialect and from the perspective of a naive, uneducated :black woman(ibid:2). Consider the following extract from the novel

last Spring little Locious come I heard them … "
fussing. He was
pulling on her arm. She say it too soon, Fanso, I ain't
gonna. Can't you see I
(am already half dead, an all these children.'' (p.1

Nevertheless, at the end of the novel, as Celie's experience of life , enriched by her new life and career, and her perception of the world became unblurred and more enlightened, the letters take an authority and the dialect assumes a rather passionate modulation of its own (Watkins,1982:3).This idea would be best captured in the : following extract from The Color Purple

After all the evil he done I know you wonder why I don't hate him for Two reasons. One ,he love Shug. And two ,Shug use to love him. Plus, look like he trying to make something out himself. I don't mean just that he work and he clean up after himself and he appreciate some of the thing God was playful enough to make I mean when you talk to him now he really listen , and one time out of nowhere in the conversation us was having , he said Celie , I'm satisfied this the first time I ever lived on Earth as a natural man .
((p:269

In an interview, Walker's use of dialect in The Color Purple is skillfully justified by her assertion that black folk English is so beautiful language and one of its beauties is its brevity. People, as Walker presumes, say what they have to say since they do not talk all the day and they do not have all day (Wilson ,1984). Hence, the salient aim of Walker's manipulation of such a succinct language is to underscore a particular type of directness which can not be (achieved if any other variety is used instead.(Ibid

Excluding Nettie's letters to her sister, Celie, The Color Purple is largely written in AAVE and provides a rich representation of black folks speech. Walker's novel, in this case, is seen as a sample source of information about the dominant syntactic features of AAVE. In AAVE, lots of syntactic features can be identified. But .negation appears to be the most predominant among these features

Gloria Watkins, the African-American theorist and the writer, has argued that The Color Purple is a burlesque of the tradition the slave-narrative stories written by males and females former slaves about their experiences under slavery (cited in Lavender,1998: 1) . The following section is devoted to review some aspects of the language history of black Americans, specially, the origins and the development of their AAVE showing , in short, its most important .phases

Origins and History of AAVE −3

Although some linguists state that the history of black English in the USA is ''complex, controversial, and even today only partly understood" (Crystal, 1990:237) , many studies attempted by other linguists uncover exhaustive information and facts about the origin of the AAVE dialect and its development which are due to social and historical events of the American black experience. While it is quite clear that it shares some features with the Creole English Language-forms spoken by people throughout the globe, AAVE is said to emerge from one or more slave Creoles as a result of the trans-Atlantic African slave trade. > ''http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American-Vernacular-.(>"English

Black slaves, coming from different language backgrounds, found themselves in a situation where they have to build up common auxiliary language in order to communicate with each other on the one hand and with their captors on the other. The result of this was that several Pidgin forms, simplified mixtures of two or more languages, were developed. As such, when the slaves arrived in the Caribbean or somewhere along the coast of North America, they continued to use their Pidgin forms among themselves and to .(communicate with the landowners (Crystal, 1990:234-235

These Pidgin forms were , therefore, the result of the close contact between members of different language backgrounds for the purpose of communication. A striking turn in the development of the language of black slaves took place when their children learned their Pidgin forms and started to use them as their mother tongue. It was the first time to turn their Pidgin forms into a Creole, and it .(was the first black Creole in the region(Ibid

Until almost 1700, incarcerated Africans were using rather .perfect native languages

Meanwhile, the Wolof Language became one of the basis of a sort of intermediary Pidgin among Africans , and it appeared in the forefront in tracing the African heredity of AAVE. This African Pidgin, The Wolof, had made its way into the language of literary

works of that time such as Daniel Defoe's novel The Life of Colonel Jacque.(''African American Vernacular English'' accessed 27 October,2009 at > ''http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American-Vernacular-English''<).

It was during the time of the American Civil War that the language of black slaves became familiar to a large number of educated white Americans. Higginson, in his book Army Life in a Black Regiment (1870), mentioned many properties of his soldiers language and pointed out the first reference to the distinction within AAVE "been" between stressed ''BIN'' and unstressed "bin".(Ibid)

After the American Civil War (1861-1865), slaves received civil rights for the first time, and they were free to move from one place to another. As blacks immigrated to new parts of the country, their culture is turned to be known especially through music and dance. New informal vocabulary was picked up from gospels, blues and jazz and became used by all Americans. Moreover, black slaves took their Creole with them to different areas in West Africa where several Black English Varieties used in certain African tribes show much similarity to the Creole dialects in the United States documented during the time following the abolition of slavery.

After World War II, desegregation and the black power movement brought AAVE once more to the attention of whites and great research projects made one of the most studied dialects of all the time. This variety of speech has become widely accepted as a rule-governed linguistic system. Finally ,this dialect is recognized not as a mass of random errors committed by black slaves trying to speak English but as having distinct rules of its own and ,therefore, a well-deserved recognition is given to AAVE among other dialects. (Paakkonen, 1997:2). As such, the following section of the study is meant to compliment the picture of the AAVE variety as a social dialect used by the African Americans as a symbol of their black unity.

4- AAVE as a Social Dialect

It is not an overstatement to say that AAVE has a unique place among many different varieties of English spoken by diverse races and cultural entities scattered over a wide area of the world. It is adopted by the working class descendants of US slaves who, as a result of being brought over as slaves and also remained slaves until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, differ from all other ethnic groups living in the USA (Paakkonen, 1997:1).

Afro-American Vernacular English, in fact, did not receive much linguistic interest until recently. Before that, it was believed that this variety, spoken by the majority of Black Americans, was just a kind of incorrect English with grammatical and other types of errors (Ferguson & Heath, 1981:92-107). It is also claimed that AAVE, as a social variety, can cause problems from a social perspective in the way that it may be stigmatized as an improper or even as bad variety of speech (Luomala,1997:1). In this case, speakers of Standard English consider it as bad speech when Black Americans do not use grammatical forms which are required when using Standard English, for example, as with the absence of the verb "to be" in forms like "My children not my sister and brother. Pa not pa"(Walker, 1982:182) or the use of double negative constructions as "Us don't say nothing bout Sofia's troubles.''(ibid:268)

The Black English speech community is clearly marked by many situations and communicative events which are known as in-groups associations. This means that the use of AAVE in such situations and events is a form of identification with one's Blackness as a part of Black America(Ibid). The African –Americans nowadays have not only conserved and multiplied their ancestors linguistic structures, but also avoided the partaking in many current linguistic changes in their surrounding (Howe, 2005:172). While some scholars have argued that Black English is a language that will not be with the Americans much longer, (Dillard, 1972), others confirm the idea that AAVE, as the Black Americans variety of speech., is manifested by certain pressures within its own group of speakers. Group identity seems to be the strongest of these social pressures (Paakkonen,1997:2).

Black English is picked up and made a symbol of Black unity of many of the 1960s Black artists and intellectuals. Recently, a school of black poets produces poetry in AAVE and many writers use it in prose, too. Alice Walker, as one of those black American writers, has insistently preserved this dialect use as she intends to keep using her parents language and to enable her daughter, as a member of the new black American generation, to know how her (ancestors were thinking and speaking. (Wilson,1984

AAVE, nowadays is used by some 80% of present-day black Americans (Crystal, 1990:237; Rickford , 1999:9). Therefore, it has been of special interest to many linguists not only because it diverges in degree but also in type from Standard American English as well as from other non-standard and regional varieties. (Mufwene et al, .(1998; Green, 2002

Some Dominant Syntactic Features of AAVE−5

Various sources of information suggest that the AAVE features and patterns are, in many areas, rather similar to those of Standard English though, in other areas, dominant differences are to be found .(too (Koskinen, 1997:2

Evidences from Early African American English provided by Shana Poplack shed light on the grammar of the dialect spoken by the descendants of migration of Early AAVE-spoken groups from some isolated enslaves in Samana' and Sova Scotia and states that this grammar is closer to that of the contemporary British Dialects than modern AAVE is to current American dialects (Poplack, .(2000:109-140

Despite the fact that it is systematic language variety with its own patterns of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, AAVE has an obvious influence on the presently used Standard American English: many of its words and expressions have found their way to .(common use in other variants of English (Koskinen, 1997:2

Recently, AAVE has received much linguistic interest especially to substantiate its distinctive features. In fact, this variety is not only defined by its lexical choices but also by its own rules of

phonology and grammar. The first well-established grammatical study of this variety is accomplished by the linguist William Labov in 1965. Labov (2007) states that the grammar of AAVE has three types of special features: " Characteristic word order or syntax, the use of suffixes or inflections, and the use of grammatical markers . " "such as "be" and "been

According to many linguists, understanding AAVE syntax is very important to realize that it has its own rules that make it distinct from other dialects. Labov (2007) suggests that only a few features of word order are considered to be distinct to AAVE. Questions, for example, have the normal word order of an affirmative sentence of :Standard English as in

They do? He ast." (Walker ,1982:279) " as equivalent to '' Do "(1)

(.they ? He asked." used in Standard English(SE henceforth

Who she think she is" as equivalent to "Who does she think " (2)

.she is?" used in SE

Questions in AAVE, in this case, show no need for the auxiliary "do" or "be" . Indirect questions of AAVE preserve the order of a :main question as in

. ؟I asked her did she know (3)

The other distinct of AAVE is the use of the word "say" to :introduce questions as in

Mr.------ say How old she is?"(ibid:9) as equivalent to'' Mr.----- " (4)

."؟asked '' How old is she

The word "say" is also used to introduce sounds where a Standard :English speaker uses "go" as in

."!He say, boom!" as an equivalent to" It went boom "(5)

The use of the words "it" and "is" as equivalents to " there is " and " there are " in Standard English is another unique feature of :AAVE: the following sentences will exemplify this use

".It ain't no book." To mean " There is no book " (6)

Is a girl in the garden." To mean " There is a girl in the " (7)

".garden

Standard American English uses a conjugated "be" verb, called "copula" in different situations. It may occur as "is or 's", "are or 're" , "am or 'm", etc. The occurrence of the "be" forms is perfectly determined by the subject. What come into sight in AAVE, concerning the use of "be" , is that it is often omitted in the present :tense as in

(she the woman he wanted to marry." (ibid:66" (8)

.(People insane , say Shug." (ibid:217…" (9)

It seem important to mention ,here, that all of these features ,beside some others including different negation forms, are remarkably recognized in The Color Purple. As we stated earlier, negation is the most prevailing feature in AAVE as the following .section puts forward

Negation In The Afro-American Vernacular English−6

Debate over the origin of Afro American Vernacular English, a variety used by some about 80% of present-day Americans(Rickford, 1999:9), has been well documented in the literature of linguists with competing theories dating back to mid 1900s. Since that time, negation has taken its place as one of the central topics of several public debates. (Howe and Walker, 2000; Weldon, 1994; Winford, 1998). According to Winford(1992:350) negation is one of the predominant areas in which AAVE manifests traces of its Creole origin. But, negation system of AVVE, according to other linguists, is basically'' that of non-standard colonial .(English'' (Howe and Walker, 2000:110; Kautzsch, 2000

Though they do not constitute an exception in the history of English, negative forms of AVVE are constructed differently from those of standard American English(Howe and Walker, 2000:119), and from those found in other non-standard dialects as well. .((Wolfram,1991:293; Feagin, 1979:215

Beside many distinctive features and properties of AVVE, the use of ain't, negative concord, negative inversion and negative postponing are most notably suggested to be the most .(salient.(Walker,2005:2

As such, a rather detailed exploration of each of these negative patterns and forms that endow AVVE distinctiveness among other .varieties will be the main focus of the following sections

Rules of Negation in AAVE −7

Different varieties of English, including AAVE, disclose some rules for making an English positive sentence negative. However, these rules of negation are applied differently in these varieties. In Standard English, for instance, three rules of negation are :identified

a) The addition of "not" to the indefinite pronoun as "anybody,) anyone, etc.." turns a positive statement into a negative one as in the :following example

. "Anybody can do anything " (10)

This positive statement is made negative by the addition of "not" to the first indefinite pronoun that is its subject to become as "Not anybody can do anything" . By a pronunciation rule, this sentence is .(finally converted into" Nobody can do anything"(Sidnell, 2002

b) A positive sentence, according to the second rule, is made) negative by the addition of "not" to the auxiliary verb of the :sentence as in the following example

.She can not say anything (11)

c) One final rule of negation can be applied by the addition of "not") to the last indefinite phrase in the sentence which is the subject of : the verb. Accordingly, a sentence like

He can do anything." is made negative by adding "not" to "
"anything" and then it is converted, by a pronunciation rule, to
: appear as

. "He can do nothing " (12)

Ordinarily, the application of one of these rules, in a standard English sentence, leaves no space for another rule to be utilized in the same context. However, these rules of negation can be applied differently in AAVE sentence wherein two or more of them can be utilized in more than one place. Labov's famous sentence best
:illustrates the case

(It ain't no cat can't get in no coop" (Labov, 1972:818 " (13)

(Won't nobody catch us" (ibid:811 " (14)

Linguistically, using more than one rule of negation in different places of a sentence to make it negative is best known as negative concord or multiple negation, for which the following section is
.thoroughly devoted

Negative Concord 1−7

The study of negation in AAVE has also dominated by attention to another distinguished exponent publically known as negative concord or multiple negation(Baugh, 1983:82; Labov et al, 1968:277). Negative concord ,as a term, stems from Mathesius (1937:79-83 as cited in Winkler ,2006)to describe cases where two or more forms of negation are used to express a single negation in a sentence. AAVE ,as well as other non-standard varieties and languages, is characterized by the frequent use of negative concord as two or sometimes multiple negative elements exist in more than
:one position in a sentence. For instance

".Nobody ever thought about picking up anything" (15)

".Ain't nobody ever thought about picking up anything "(16)

The two above mentioned sentences quoted from Labov(1972:785), provide instances where negative concord is used

in both Standard American and African American Vernacular English respectively. Apparently, AAVE seems to have some thing in common with other varieties of English and some other languages :as it

turns out to be like Italian with regard to negative "

،concord

not like Standard English …….. Neither AAVE nor Italian
is illogical, it is just that their grammatical rules for
expression of indefinites in negated clauses differ from the rules
".for Standard English

(Pullum,1999:49)

As such, AAVE can never be seen as a Standard English with mistakes, rather, it is a variety in which double negation can be described as being diagnostic. The application of negative concord in modern AAVE, as many historical studies suggest, is recent development of the variety itself and does not document creole .(traces of any kind(Labov et al , 1968; Howe & Walker 2000:110

Despite the fact that negative concord has its long history in other varieties of English including Old English(Traugott, 1992:170), Bickerton(1981:65) considers it as a typical feature of Creole languages as many examples, documented in some of these Creole :languages, suggest

anon dog na bait non kyat." (Cuyanese Creole; Bickerton, " (17)

(1981:661

.(Nobody bit any cat)

(a nonbadi na sii am " (Cuyanese Creole; Bickerton , 1981:185 " (18)

.(Nobody saw him)

According to Howe (2005: 186), two types of negative concord :can be distinguished

Negative concord to indefinites is the most dominant variant of −1 negation in AAVE. It is applied to different indefinites including pronouns , adverbials, non-count nouns and plural nouns. The following examples, cited in Howe (2005:186) ,will best clarify some :uses of negative concord in AAVE

".She won't change for nobody " (19)

".I ain't never scared, I'm everywhere, you ain't never there " (20)

".I was like fuck it, cuz I ain't got no dough anyway " (21)

Man, niggas don't give a fuck about no lyrics no more man, (22) .shit

Feagin(1971:232) states that such types of negative concord are frequently used and almost common in most non-standard English varieties but they turn to be near categorical in AAVE and they (seem to be not optional. (Labov, 1972:806

However, singular indefinite count nouns, according to some linguists, do not participate in negative concord. Cheshire (1982:65), for instance, states that " with singular countable nouns the form a is used … . Negative concord does not occur with a ". The same idea is beforehand held by Labov (1972:806) and Feagin (1974) who both agree that the indefinite article "a" is not involved in negative concord. The underlying from of no, according to Labov 1972, is negative+any but not negative+a, which is realized as" not a". Howe(2005:188), on the other hand, provides a rather different notion that "no" can be interpreted as negative+a , rather than :negative+any as the following example demonstrates

it ain't been thirty-seven ---------- thirty-seven--------- I ain't be " (23) no deacon thirty year (-----) it wouldn't be thirty-seven years." .((Ibid

In AAVE, negative concord is notably not clause-bound and it stretches regularly to indefinites' in a separate non-finite clause

whether gerundive or infinitival (Ibid). Consider the following :sentences

We ain't never had no trouble about non of us pullin out no " (24) (knife." (Wolfram,1969:153

Nobody don't want to have nothing to do with nobody that " (25) (ain't hot right now.(cited in Howe,2005:188

Use of negative concord ,in fact, can be demonstrated in so-called negative transportation constructions wherein it is applied to indefinites in separate finite clauses particularly when the matrix clause has a negative raising predicate like think, believe, etc. in the (following instances cited in Howe(2004:188

I believe in one God----- I believe that God talked to all " (26) ".prophets. I don't believe that no prophet is no God

I don't think that's nobody's mission, to change hip-hop or " (27) ".change rap, cause there ain't nothing wrong with it

The two extracts can be, respectively, interpreted as(I don't believe that any prophet is a God) and (I don't think that's anybody's mission ……). However, a sentence like " he supposed to be well because I ain't heard that nothing is happen" (Ibid) shows that negative concord can also be used in a finite clause even with .the absence of negative raising predicate

As well as in finite clauses, negative concord also occurs in non-:finite clauses in negative raising constructions

yas, everything that I'm tellin ya I'm a witness to an I don't " (28) (want to tell ya nothing that ain't true." (cited in Howe:2005:190

(I don't think that takes no weight." (ibid" (29)

Less common than the first type of negative concord, negative −2 concord to verbs, according to Howe (2005:192) can also be applied :in AAVE as in the following examples

None of 'em can't fight." (Labov, 1972:786 as cited in Howe " (30)
(,2005:192
(Nobody don't believe it now. (Feagin 1979:241 " (31)

As it happens, it is easy, for Winkler (2006:6-8), to identify three types of negative
a) The first type takes place between the auxiliary and the post)
:verbal negative indefinite "no-word" of a sentence as in
.John ain't got no money (32)
b) The second type of negative concord is illustrated in a sentence)
:like
Nobody around here ain't heard of him" (Ibid). Negative " (33)
concord ,in this case, occurs between the pre-verbal no-word
."(nobody) and the auxiliary within the sentence "ain't
c) And finally, negative concord, according to Winkler (2006:8),)
can also occur between the auxiliary in the matrix clause and the no-
:word in the embedded clause as in
He didn't say (that) anybody was eating any college president" " (34)
.((Ibid

. Negative postposing 2−7

It seems worth mentioning that in AAVE, as well as in standard English variety, preverbal negation can be deleted if the verb phrase contains a negative word so, in this case, there is no need to use :(negative concord in sentences like those cited in Howe,2005:91

".Yall talking loud plus y'll saying nu thin " (35)

".I see no changes " (36)

Being used in this way, another type of negative constructions, known as negative postposing, in AAVE has been under many

linguists scrutiny. This type of negation is argued to occur not only in AAVE but, rather, in all varieties of American English though in different degrees (Schneider, 1989:194; Kautzsch, 2000:47). Just like negative concord, negative postposing in AAVE usually takes place :across clauses as the following example suggests

". That one had time to take out nothing" (37)

The above mentioned sentence, cited in Howe(2005:192), can be interpreted as " he didn't have time to take out anything" . Accordingly, the negated auxiliary disappeared since another .negative word "nothing" is located in the verb phrase

Colloquial English, as Tottie (1991:233) claims, reveals examples of negative postposing constructions that frequently occur with some verbs like; have, be, got, know, give, and make. These verbs are also mentioned in Howe (2005:192) as the most favorable to .negative postponing in AAVE

Negative Inversion 3-7

Besides some other non-standard American varieties, AAVE displays another distinct form of negation, linguistically known as negative inversion. When a negative verb particle, such as an auxiliary, comes initially before an indefinite pronoun, such as: nobody, no one, etc…., which is the subject of the verb, we have a .case of negative inversion

Though it is rare, but present in early AAVE, negative inversion is likely to be used in some other non-standard English such as the Ozark English (Christian et al, 1988) and some southern, rural white American English varieties (Feagin, 1979:234-242). It is not untrue that many representative examples of such use of negation are documented in the ex-slave narratives (Howe, 2005: 194). But the first well known description of negative inversion, used by AAVE speakers, is shown by Labov et al (1968). The following two sentences are good examples of the AAVE inverted negative :constructions

(Ain't nobody complain but you man. "(Ibid" (38)

(Can't nobody tag you then. " (Ibid " (39)

It is worth explaining that negative inversion forms, by form, bear something in common with those interrogative constructions in that both of them start with an auxiliary that comes initially before the subject of the verb. However, it is reasonable to say that this similarity is quite superficial since each of these construction functions differently; the former refers to declarative sentences ending with full stops, while the latter refers to yes-no type questions normally ending with question marks. Examples of the two types of :construction are respectively shown in the following sentences

Didn't nobody get hurt or nothing." (Christian et al, " (40)

(1988:169

Can't somebody/anybody tell you it wasn't meant for you? " (41)

((Green,2010 :1

As regard negative concord, Green (2010:2) suggests that it is likely for negative inversion constructions to receive a negative concord reading wherein repeated morphological negatives, at various points in a clause are used to indicate that the clause is negative. With this in mind, Feagin (1979:215) argues that negative concord is not necessary condition to license negative inversion as :the following example illustrates

(Didn't anybody seem to understand " (Ibid " (42)

One more negative inversion is, apparently, possible in different relative and other embedded clauses starting with "that". Cited in :Howe (2005:194), the following example best explain this point

I just hope that don't nobody bring none of the street shit to " (43)

".show this year

You got to know, that can't nobody stop my flow." . Further " (44) elements like "many" and expletive "there" can be included within an inverted negative construction. In their study of Harlem AAVE, :Labov et al (1968:350) provide some examples about this use

(Don't many of them live around here." (Ibid " (45)

(There couldn't many of them go to school." (Ibid " (46)

Negative inversion constructions are suggested to reveal a pragmatic affective meaning by which prominence to the negative form is added(Labov et al, 1968:288). Then after, the same idea has been supported by many linguists including Schneider (1989:195) who states that negative inversion is the most frequent negative form used by the earlier Black English speakers in order to achieve emphasis in their negated clauses. More recently, Green (2010:2) reports that the affective interpretation of the negative inversion constructions, first claimed by Labov et al (1968:288), refers to the sentential negation reading in which the negated auxiliary is emphatic in a focused position as the following sentence, cited in :Wolfram (2002:15), suggests

".Don't nobody like him " (47)

Many entrenched historical studies of the AAVE negative constructions suggest that the application of negative inversion forms is a recent development of the dialect itself and mention no Creole traces of any type (Howe & Walker, 2000:110 ; Bickerton, .(1975, 1981

" The Use of "ain't 4−7

The question whether "ain't" in AVVE functions as a tense aspect neutral monomorphemic marker of negation similar to those found in Creole varieties(Debose 1994:128) or whether it functions as a negated auxiliary like those found in the white non-standard varieties of English(Ewers, 1996: 231-232; Howe, 1997:267-294; Howe & Walker, 2000:109-140), has been a central area in the previously mentioned issues of debate concerning the origin and .development of AVVE negative constructions

Notably, "ain't" is used as a general indicator of negation in AVVE where in other varieties, including the Standard American English, "am not, isn't, aren't haven't, and hasn't" are used instead (Howe,2005:174-180). It is also used where" don't, doesn't and

didn't" are used in Standard American English.(Flash & Wolfram: .(1975; Labov et al, 1968:255-257; Weldon,1994:367

In accordance with some researches examining the distribution of "ain't" in context of "didn't" in modern AVVE and earlier AAVE (see Weldon, 1993), the preference of the use of "ain't" turns to be more identifiable in earlier AVVE, (see Howe, 1997; 2004; .2005; Poplack, 2000), than in present day AAVE

The relative prominence of use of "ain't" in "didn't" environment in AVVE (Howe 1997; Walker 2005; Howe &walker 1999; Kautzach 2000,2002) is considered as a "recent and spectacular development" (Howe, 1997: 284) which took place in the .course of the 20th century

In the negative "be" environment, the use of "ain't" seems also to be very frequent among AAVE speakers. What lies behind this high frequency, according to Schneider(1989:201) closely follows its usage for the negative "have" environment in the ex-slave narratives. Feagin(1979) argues that the use of "ain't" for the negative past tense "be" in earlier AAVE is rare. Yet, it is never .(used in modern AAVE(Weldon,1994:371

Instead of "ain't", "wasn't" is the normal form of the past tense "copula" in both negative and affirmative constructions (Labov et al ; 1968:246). Most speakers of AAVE had rates of "was/wasn't" above 80% for plural environment and thus no separate figures for negative and positive forms are given by Labov et al (1968). Indeed, the use of "weren't" is very rare in AAVE because "wasn't" is the near-categorical negative auxiliary in past tense copula constructions (Weldon, 1994: 361) even in earlier AAVE (Tagliamonte & Smith,2000:157). Revealingly, African Americans of all ages show a strong preference to level to "was" with all types of pronouns; younger Americans tend to level to "wasn't" almost always whereas older Americans level to "weren't" half the .(time(Wolfram,2003:292

A new form for the past tense "be+not", as Hazen(1997) reports, has been recently developed by some isolated communities of North Carolina. The recent form is "won't" is currently used by

those communities and by Americans who also favor leveling to "weren't" (Ibid). It is supposed that African Americans innovated "won't" as a phonetic variant of "weren't" because, unlike members of surrounding communities, they favor re-vocalization .((Wolfram & Sellers, 1999

The rates of regularization in both singular and plural context, as Hazen(1998:233) states, are higher for "won't" when the subject is omitted than when it is present. But, according to (Hazen, 1997:101-112; Weldon, 1994:356-397), "ain't" is more prevalent than "isn't" or "aren't" when phrase initial. Being used this way, phrase initial "won't" and "ain't" may be the result of a preference for fronting negative particles fro emphasis effect. In fact, "wasn't" and "weren't" only become negative through affixation, whereas "ain't" and "won't" are negative particles as a result of derivation .((Hazen, 1998:233

However, the occurrence of "ain't", according to Weldon(1994:359-397) and Walker(2005:3) is linguistically restricted not only by the type of the auxiliary but also by some other factors as the verbal aspect and the existence of negative .concord

Negation in Alice Walker's The Color Purple −8

It is not untrue that Alice Walker in her most well known novel, The Color Purple, is much more concerned with managing some linguistic elements including verb deletion, tense variation, co-ordination and subordination in order to attain some artistic effects. But, more specifically, negation appears to be the most conspicuous among these linguistic elements. Given this importance, little knowledge of how negative forms and patterns, used in AAVE, are constructed will impede the readers' interpretation of any literary .work written in AAVE

Undeniably, hundreds of negative constructed forms are used in The Color Purple. So, one can easily recognize the frequent use of "ain't" in the negative of "be" environment particularly in Celie's letters to ''God'' and her to her sister, Nettie. A considerable

number of structures in these letters suggest the use of "ain't" :instead of "is not". The following are some of these examples

(She ain't that bright.'' (p.32" (48)

(A girl child ain't safe in a family of men.'' (p.42 "(49)

(Ain't that right, Grady, she say.'' (P.12 "(50)

In the place of "am not" ain't is also used in many examples :identified in Celie's letters as shown below

(I ain't well.'' (p.1 "(51)

(I ain't living in the street.'' (p.32 "(52)

(I ain't you fucking mama''. (p.120 "(53)

Ain't" is also used in the place of "aren't" in some examples like " :the following

It be more than a notion taking care of children ain't eren " (54) (yourn.'' (p.5

(They ain't coming back, say Harpo.'' (p.74 " (55)

Less frequently, "ain't" occurs in the place of "didn't" as in the :following sentences

(Us ain't never spoke.'' (p.24" (56)

(And he ain't stuck on pretty.'' (p.42 " (57)

Also, the preference of using "ain't" instead of "haven't" and :"hasn't" is respectively identified in the following examples

(He ain't beat me since you made………..'' (p.195 " (58)

(Ain't I been helpful, I ast.'' (p.42 " (59)

(Ain't I seen you before?'' (p.101 " (60)

However, the existence of "ain't" in certain linguistic structures is, linguistically, restricted by some other factor called "Negative Concord" (Wolfram,1973; Weldon, 1994; Walker, 2005). As such "ain't" is frequently used where another indicator of negation is

found in the same context. The following examples best illustrate :this point

(She ain't no stranger to hard work.'' (p.9 " (61)

(She ain't interested in nothing.'' (p.14" (62)

(I ain't never heard of.'' (p.114" (63)

To address the point, one can say that "ain't" is used in the AAVE negative concord constructions as some other words like never, no, nothing, either…. etc exist in other positions within the same sentence and it is quite vivid that all negatable forms are negated. To elaborate, a negative concord construction occurs when two or more negative indicators are used to express single negation in a sentence(Mathesius, 1973: 79-83, as cited in Winkler,2006). Alice Walker makes a considerable use of such a distinct negative :construction which is identifiably used in some examples like

(He don't say nothing.'' (p.3" (64)

(I ain't never look at that one, he say.'' (p.9" (65)

(They won't let me see no mens.'' (p.108" (66)

(You know I don't mean no harm.'' (p.119" (67)

The structures in (64,65,66,67) above exemplify the two negative concord types identified by Howe (2005) since in each of them negative concord is respectively applied to indefinites' including pronouns, adverbials, plural nouns and non-count nouns. None of the negative concord constructions spotted in Celie's letters to God displays the capability of using any indefinite count noun to participate in structures of such kind. It follows then, that Cashire's statement (1982:65) that indefinite nouns do not participate in such types of structures since a singular count noun is usually associated with "a" which, by its turn, can never be used in negative concord constructions Labov(1972:806); Feagin (1979) and Schneider (1989:192) tends to be true in the case of negative concord adopted .in The Color Purple

With this in mind, the meaning of "no" in these constructions can either be understood as "negative +any" (Labov, 1972:804), or as

"negative +a" (Howe,2005:188). As such, a sentence like "I ain't no man" (p.152), can be interpreted as " I am not a man" or as " I am not any man" (Labov,1972) and (Howe,2005). Less frequently applied to verbs, the second type of negative concord identified by Howe (2005:192-197) also appears in some examples from Celie's :letters to God and to her sister. Consider the following

(Nobody ever love me. I say''. (p.117" (68)

(but none of them didn't know it.'' (p.50" (69)

(None of us never seen the ocean.'' (p.250" (70)

Some other examples from The Color Purple implicate that negative concord cannot only be applied in finite clauses but, rather, it can also be found in non-finite clauses in negative concord :constructions like the following

(They won't let me see no mens.'' (p.108" (71)

(She don't know how to do nothing.'' (p.110" (72)

(I don't even want to say nothing.'' (p.126" (73)

Revealingly, all the three types of negative concord constructions suggested by Winkler (2006:6-9) are frequently manipulated in :Walker's The Color Purple as shown in the following examples

(They won't let me see no mens.'' (p.108" (74)

(But none of them didn't know it.'' (p.282 ...." (75)

I almost didn't because he can't play nothing but flute.'' " (76)

((p.255

As it happens, a negative concord constructions can exist between the auxiliary and the verbal negative indefinite "no-word" as with the case in (74). It also can occur between the pre-verbal no-word and the auxiliary within the sentence as in example (75) . Finally, it occurs in (76) between the auxiliary in the matrix clause and the no- .word in the embedded clause

On more distinct negative construction in AAVE occurs when an indefinite pronoun like "nobody" or "nothing" is inverted with a

negative-verb particle like, didn't, don't, can not, .. etc, in a negative-constructed sentence. This type of negative construction, known as negative inversion, is notably used in some examples :identified in The Color Purple. Here follows three of them

(Don't nobody come see us.'' (p.3" (77)

Can't nothing make me happier than seeing you again.'' " (78)

((p.222

(Can't nobody tell 'em nothing even today.''(p.281" (79)

He mouth open showing all her teeth and don't nothing seem " (80)

(to be troubling her mind.'' (p.26

It is clear that each of the aforementioned examples has something in common with an interrogative construction in terms of the sentence word arrangement. In both cases there is an inverted auxiliary-verb construction, but each with different function and meaning. The pragmatic affective meaning by which prominence is added to the negative form in a negative inversion construction, (Labov,1968:288), in each of the aforementioned examples is, no doubt, quite clear. Therefore, the negated verb particle, placed in a focused position, is emphatically used in order to intensify the meaning of negation. Thus, in the example (80), the sentence can be convincingly interpreted as "Her mouth is open with teeth exposed a ".little bit and she seems quite indifferent

Written in white missionary language, Nettie's letters demonstrate no pervasive manipulation of the fairly distinct patterns of negation used in Celie's letters. A solitary instance of such constructions is located in Nettie's first letter to Celie before the former starts her missionary journey to Africa. So, in this example " He ain't no good" (p.113) "ain't" and "no" are used together to formulate a double negative construction similar to the ones identified in Celie's letters. But then, after starting her missionary journey and supported by some missionary employers; namely Carroine and Samuel, Nettie's letters changed to be non-distinctive and .(completely written in standard variety (Lucker, 1988:972

About 250 instances of negative constructions have been identified in Nettie's letters. All of these constructions except the one explained above are constructed in accordance to the normal rules of negation recommended by the standard English variety wherein a single marker of negation is used to express the reversal of the language user's expectations or, more precisely, to reverse the truth value :existing in a given sentence as

(but I don't want him to know where I am.'' (p.134 " (81)

It is breaking because I cannot find any work in this town, and " (82) I will have to

(leave.'' (p.134

(But I never dreamed of going to Africa!'' (p.137" (83)

(The next minute nothing living was there.'' (p.137" (84)

As such, negation in Nettie's letters is expressed by the use of a single negation form as an auxiliary+ not, no-word, never or by an .indefinite pronoun such as anybody, anyone …. etc

In The Color Purple, Alice Walker numerously employs both single and multiple negative forms. More than 934 examples of negative forms are distinguished in Celie's letters, 185 of negative concord, 681 of single negation, 5 of negative inversion, and 62 of negative constructions with "ain't". With this in mind, one can conclude that Celie's letters have been show great contrast with those of Nettie's as the former are written in the black vernacular variety while the latter are written in the standard English variety. Hence, each of these varieties is intentionally employed to perform a specific function; Celie utilizes her language, the black folk dialect, in order to declare her independence from the system (June Ja,2008:183), and then to turn her voice to be that authentic folk .(voice that is shown from the novel (Watkins, 1982:7

Out of turn, Nettie's voice and language seem to be "non-distinctive" (Tower, 1982:36), "didactic" (Smith, 1982:128), "in-authentic" (Robinson, 1986:2), "Preachy" (McFadden, 1983:140) and sometimes non-expressive as the following extract from Celie's :letter points forward

What with being shock, crying and blowing "

،my nose ,and trying to puzzle out words us don't know it took along time to read just the first two or three (letters''(p.150

According to Tucker (1988:92), Celie has held on to one precious possession, that is her language, and refuses to change her speech style despite her possession of anew home, a new career ..etc. Therefore, when Darlene, one of Celie's assistances, tries to teach Celie how to talk properly according to the norms of the variety of the white Americans to say, for example, "we" instead of "us", Celie takes no care about talking like the white educated persons. Rather, she believes that " only a fool would want you to talk in a way that feel peculiar to your mind" (p.223). Being used in this way, language, for Celie is that dominant means by which she is able to express her independent personality and then to indicate her .peculiar identity

It is not hard to relate Celie's insistence on using AAVE, even when she has had her new life and career, to what is suggested by de Saussure (1950:106). De Saussure proposes that speech is the product of the individual's will rather than being constrained by society. As for Celie's use of AAVE in her letters to God and to her sister, De Saussure's idea might be nearer the truth than for Nettie's use of the standard variety in her letters to Celie. Nettie changes her style of writing as she moves to Africa starting a missionary journey. So, her job as a person teaching people in Africa about Christianity demands the standard English to be used for such formal and .serious matter

The situation in which '' two very different varieties of language co-exist in a speech community, each with a distinct range of social functions"(Yule, 1996:246), is linguistically known as diglossia. In this situation a "high" variety, like the standard American English used by Nettie, is used in formal public occasions. Meanwhile, a "low" variety, like the AAVE dialect used by Celie, is commonly utilized by laymen under normal and informal everyday

circumstances as the following extract from the novel suggests ''Darlene keep trying. Think how much better Shug feel with you educated ,she say. She won't be shame to take you anywhere''(p:223) . The existence of "high" and "low" varieties in a diglossic form is also referred to by Ferguson (1959:325-340) as :the following extract puts forward

،Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which in addition to the primary dialects of the language, (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more (complex superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, ……… which is learned largely formal purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for (ordinary conversation. (Ibid

It would be reasonable to suggest that, in the case of Alice Walker's The Color Purple, negation (with all its different forms and constructions) is the most prominent feature which draws a bold line between the standard American variety and the Afro-American Vernacular variety and turns them to be two distinct varieties, each used for different social functions. Hence, as one dominant syntactic feature of AAVE, negation is used to indicate the informal situation in which the dialect is used. Also, it is turned to be a salient stylistic choice by which Alice Walker sheds the light on .the role played by some social factors on the use of language

Conclusion −9

Though it has some features in common with other varieties of English, AAVE represents a regular systematic language variety

that contrasts with other dialects in terms of its vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. With regard to syntax, it has, for instance, a set of rules that is distinct from those of standard American English. The rules of negation used in this dialect are notably suggested to be the most salient syntactic feature that gives the dialect its own uniqueness among other varieties of English spoken all over the world. AAVE distinct negative constructions are : negative concord , negative inversion , negative postposing ,and the use of'' ain't'' for the negative(be/have/do) environment .Lacks of knowledge of how each of these negative forms is constructed ,as this study has suggested, leads to inaccurate interpretation of any .literary work written in AAVE

Heavily employed in Alice Walker's The Color Purple , AAVE forms and patterns of negation have been described in the present study . It has been shown that several patterns of negation : are utilized in Walker's The Color Purple in the following ways

The frequent use of negative concord to indefinites including – .pronouns, adverbials, plural nouns, and non- count nouns

.The less frequent use of negative concord to verbs –

A constant use of ''ain't'' for the present form be + not ,and – .for the present form of have + not is also observed

The considerable use of '' ain't '' in negative concord to – .indefinites and to verbs as well

. Negative inversion constructions are rarely used –

. The very rare use of negative postposing –

What is important , here , is to say that almost all of these forms and patterns of negation are remarkably identified in the letters of Celie ; the heroine of the novel. While, on the contrary, only one example of the use of negative concord is detected in the letters of Celie's sister; Nettie .No example about the other patterns of AAVE .negation can be identified in any of these letters

One may conclude that the use of negation in Celie's letters is , undoubtedly, intended to demonstrate the difference between the two distinct varieties used in Celie's letters and Nettie's letters as the former are written in AAVE and the latter are written in standard American English . Each of these varieties is distinctively used in different settings and circumstances. Linguistically , a situation of such type, in which two different varieties are used for distinct social functions, is known as diglossia . Using AAVE , Celie's informal everyday circumstances and conditions of life are intimately , naturally and skillfully expressed. But more formal and public state of affairs , like those Nettie experienced, as a missionary teacher, require another type of language variety to be adequately dedicated for such official circumstances. Thus, Nettie, being more educated than her sister, employs the Standard American English variety in the letters she sent to her sister ;Celie. In this sense, it is not uneasy to capture the gigantic .role played by some social factors on the use of language

Therefore , it is hoped that the findings of this study will help to expand the corpus of Investigation relating linguistics to literature . Then, the result of the analysis can be utilized in further studies conducting more sociolinguistic, syntactic, and stylistic analyses that ,no doubt, participate effectively to more comprehensive interpretation . of the AAVE literary works

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